(d) if so, the nature of the objections and the steps taken by Government to resolve the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL) : (a) to (d) There has been a paradigm shift in the strategy for rural development with focus on decentralization through speedy and effective devolution of financial and administrative powers to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to further accelerate the pace of rural development. As such the emphasis has shifted towards participation of people through Panchayati Raj Institutions and Self Help Groups in the Planning, formulation and execution of the programmes. Under most of the rural development programmes a crucial role to PRIs in the programme implementation has been assigned. At present, the funds for the major programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development, are released to the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs)/ Zila Parishads (ZPs). This procedure has been evolved over a period of time, in consultation with the State Governments, based on the experience of the Ministry in programme implementation and in consonance with the principles of decentralization enshrined in the Constitution. In the recently concluded Conference of Chief Ministers and State Ministers of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hon'ble Prime Minister has also suggested an alternative system of providing block grants to districts based on their incidence of poverty to plan and implement strategies that optimize their resource potential.

Open drains in villages

876. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether most of the villages have open drains; and

(b) if so, the action taken to cover the drains to improve rural health?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI A. NARENDRA) : (a) and (b) Providing sanitation facilities in rural areas is the responsibility of the State Governments as it is a State subject. However, Government of India extends support to the States. Under the Centrally sponsored employment generation schemes *i.e.*, Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are eligible to take up construction of drainage facility. Under Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), States are supported for

accelerated coverage of rural areas with basic sanitation facilities like construction of household, schools, anganwadis and community toilets. PRIs on cent-per cent coverage of the area under their jurisdiction with basic sanitation facilities are eligible for incentives under Nirmal Gram Puraskar, ranging from Rs. 2.0 lakh to Rs. 5.0 lakh depending upon the category and population of PRIs. This incentive money may be utilized by them to strengthen the sanitation infrastructure, including coverage of drains.

Disbursement of block grants for Rural Development Projects through district authorities

877. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to provide block grants for rural development projects direct to the district authorities instead of routing the same through the concerned State Governments;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor; and

(c) the State Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL) : (a) to (c) In the recently concluded conference of Chief Ministers and State Ministers of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, the Hon'ble Prime Minister has suggested an alternative system of providing block grants to districts based on their incidence of poverty to plan and implement strategies that optimize their resource potential. At present the funds for the majo. rural development programmes are directly provided to District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs)/Zila Parishands (ZPs) implementing agencies. This procedure has been evolved, in consultation with the State Governments based on the experience of the Ministry in programme implementation and in consonance with the principles of decentralization enshrined in the Constitution. The procedure is expected to accelerate the pace of implementation of the rural development programmes at the field level.

Restructuring and revival of NTC mills

878. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) that out of 199 NTC mills 53 mills were earmarked for restructuring and revival and MoU were signed more than two years back; and